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Ministry of Attorney General

PILOT STREAMLINES SMALL CLAIMS COURT PROCEEDINGS

VICTORIA – Government and the B.C. Provincial Court will pilot briefer trials, night court and mediation as part of justice reforms to encourage early solutions and faster justice for Vancouver and Richmond residents using small claims court.

Beginning today, plaintiffs with claims under $25,000 filed through the Robson Square court registry in downtown Vancouver will be directed to one of four streams meant to encourage mediation and simplify and speed up trials.

Two-hour mediation sessions will be held for claims of more than $5,000 and for personal injury claims of any amount. The BC Dispute Resolution Practicum Society will provide mediators at no cost to disputants.

Claims not settled in mediation will go before a judge for a 30-minute trial conference. The judge will decide the amount of time required for a trial and may hear issues not requiring evidence or dismiss claims lacking reasonable grounds or that are an abuse of the court process. The judge may give a non-binding opinion on the trial's probable outcome.

Financial debt claims of up to $25,000 will be heard in 30-minute summary trials before a judge. These claims are filed to recover monies owing on credit cards, loans or overdrafts.

Claims up to $5,000, other than financial debt or personal injury matters, will be heard in one-hour simplified trials before an experienced lawyer who is also a justice of the peace. Simplified trials will be scheduled for night court at the Robson Square court registry and during the day at Richmond Provincial Court.

The pilot was developed jointly by the B.C. Provincial Court and the Ministry of Attorney General as part of the Province's three-year justice reform initiative. If successful, it may be extended to other Provincial Court locations.

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